

Sounds Organised



September, 2007

2/07

A Moving Concert – heard from an unusual position

A Concert for Peace – Sunday April 29th 2.30pm, James Tatoulis Auditorium, Methodist Ladies College, Barkers Road, Kew. The soloists were Lauren Oldham and Laurence Meikle; the narrator was Jocelyn Terry; and the conductor was Douglas Heywood.

The program comprised Vaughan Williams' "Dona Nobis Pacem" and Michael Easton's Symphony No. 1 "Unsung Heroes".

This review comes from a unique and somewhat biased seat. Sitting behind four timpani at the back of the Camerata Orchestra and to the side of the Choir is an unusual place to hear concerts. It always provides a fantastic lesson in Choral and Orchestral arranging by the masters! On this occasion, my experience as 'apprentice-listener' of *A Concert for Peace*, was above all a moving and powerful reminder of war's painfulness, futility, war's terrible constancy through the generations, and of the beauty and solace which music can bring.

The concert itself featured two wonderful soloist singers – Lauren Oldham (Soprano) and Laurence Meikle (Baritone). Their youthful voices were poignant reminders of the age of many soldiers and their loved ones in World War Two and the Great War – the two wars most closely musically linked to the featured works – Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Michael Easton's *Unsung Heroes*. In fact (dare I say it!), the generational spread of voices between the Choir and the two soloists added to the presentation and content of both works. From my seat (between the Choir and Orchestra) I felt I

was listening to a conversation, or rather a powerful lament between one generation and another, about the terrible, but all too common, travesty of war. A lament that indeed transcended generations – from 1936 (and Vaughan Williams' work) to 1990 (and Easton's composition) – beautifully supported by the Camerata Orchestra under Doug Heywood's direction. (Bias here acknowledged!)

Each work presents a wonderful, often mournful, sometimes fiery array of colours and tempi across their respective movements. These variations and moods were well articulated by the Orchestra and the Choir (though the MLC auditorium can be a little unforgiving when voices very occasionally strayed). However, overall, the depth of emotion, the poignancy of this concert's theme – further enhanced by narrator Jocelyn Terry's reading from *Unsung Heroes* – were compellingly communicated.

(Special thanks and commendation must go to Doug Heywood for tirelessly re-writing – from memory – parts of Michael Easton's score. Unfortunately, Michael is no longer with us).

Elissa Goodrich

Elissa Goodrich, a graduate of VCA and current Masters of Creative Arts candidate at Melbourne University, is a freelance composer-percussionist in contemporary jazz, pop and classical music and in contemporary theatre and dance. Elissa has recently completed work on Bagryana Popov's new dance theatre version of Chekov's The Cherry Orchard and is about to record her second

EDITORIAL

- Many thanks to John Gregory, the previous Editor, for all his work.
- Really good to see Doug back with us. We hope he is completely recovered now; and our thanks to those who filled in so ably while he was away. Welcome back, Maestro!
- In the continuing series of pen pictures of members of the choir –
 - We celebrate our oldest member, Val Kerr, who is 88 this year. She explains how much music has meant to her – a subscriber to the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for over 70 years and a wonderful participant in Camberwell Chorale.
 - Robynne Sanders, one of the two women who sings in our tenor section, reminds us how a friend or colleague can introduce us to music and the choir, how much pleasure we can give and receive from participation, and how important it is to welcome and support new members.
- Finally, thanks to all who have contributed to this issue of *Sounds Organised*. Feedback is welcome – what you like and what you don't. Also, contributions for future issues are warmly encouraged.

CSS

original CD, *Worlds within Worlds*, with world-jazz Shannon-Goodrich Ensemble (www.myspace.com/shannongoodrichensemble). Elissa's percussive scape was one of twenty international works featured in *Soundwaves Festival*, Brighton United Kingdom in June this year.

Chris Selby Smith

We note, with great sadness, the death of tenor, Chris Selby Smith on 15th September.

A keen member of the Chorale, Chris had been taking singing lessons over recent months.

This year, he became a member of the Committee, and an excellent Editor of the newsletter.

A Rhodes Scholar, his life had been very full and active throughout.

Along the way, he'd been a senior Federal bureaucrat in the Prime Ministers Department and the Department of Health, and a Management Professor at Monash, in which role he'd authored and edited many books and other publications.

Interests included flyfishing and bushwalking, tour-guiding at the MCC, overseas travel (recently Chile, Italy and the Antarctic), and and in the past, cricket, and squash among many other things.

A good friend lost.

DD

Choir Activities

Social Committee

Margaret Keighley and her colleagues on the Social Committee (MVdG, MH, LO, HG, MB and BT) have continued to make sterling progress in raising funds for Camberwell Chorale. Their raffles raised a total of \$1,603 between February and July this year.

The total of \$1,603 includes \$205 from Doug's CD's, \$128 from sale of pies, \$118 from Pauline Lynch's lemon products, \$54 from sale of lipsticks, \$14 from sale of chocolates and \$1,084 from the weekly raffle.

Their fund raising efforts have been assisted by generous donations from various choir members.

Monster Garage Sale

with Sausage Sizzle and Cake Stall

- To be held on Saturday October 6, from 8am to 2pm.

- At the Scout Hall, Ashburton Park, High Street, Ashburton.
- It raised over \$3,000 for the choir last year. So, please support it if you can.
- General bric-a-brac, eg, books, china, garden tools, records, tapes, CD's, DVD's, clothing (only if good and clean, please), accessories such as belts, brooches, ties, etc.
- Sean Dillon is willing to help with transport of large items eg. furniture. His telephone number is 9894 1898 (mobile: 0439 307 285); and his email address is seandillon@vic.chariot.net.au.
- Talk to Sean Dillon, Helen Brown or Marg Hill if you need more information.

Fashion Parade

- 15 September in the Meeting Room (at rear of the Camberwell Baptist Church, Riversdale Road, Camberwell.
- Light lunch served from 12 noon; Fashion Parade starts at 1 pm.
- Tickets are \$10 per head.
- Lucky door prize (an \$80 clothing voucher).
- Choir to receive 10% of the value of all purchases.
- Plenty of room – bring your friends, family, neighbours, etc (and a plate, please).
- Margaret Keighley has a catalogue. So you can order even if you can't attend.
- Clothes can be tried on. Sizes from 6-28 available.

Xmas Dinner – an early notice
To be held on Tuesday 11 December.

Please remember to put this date into your diary

PS – Thank God You're Here

On the evening of Thursday 30 August, some thirty CC-choristers participated in an episode of *Thank God You're Here* at Channel Ten's Global Studios in Nunawading. The episode is expected to be screened later in the year.

Recent Committee Decisions

– Secretary, Levi Orenstein reports on last Committee Meeting, held on 16th July . . .

- **Application** for special grant: under the Boroondara Community Grants program, we are applying for a grant to prepare a performance of R.Vaughan Williams' "Pilgrims Progress" in 2008. This will require 26 soloists (yes that's right!).
- **Choir risers:** Sean Dillon has made some himself, but we need foldable ones, which would cost more to purchase. No decision on this yet.
- **Finance:** a loss of approx. \$2000 on the July concert, but funds are still healthy. 15 members have heeded Adam's call for tax-deductible donations.
- **Recruitment:** there is a need for new members, especially in younger age groups. Peter Fitzroy has designed a recruiting brochure, and others are asked to make efforts at distributing it.
- **Library:** with no storage facility at Camberwell Baptist Church, this is presently in Sean's garage, which is OK only while he is Librarian. We may need to pay to rent storage space.
- **Social:** currently there is a cake drive, the "Blue Illusion" evening was recently held, and a fashion event is planned for 15th September.
- **Next meeting:** 10th September. Members are invited to suggest any items for Committee discussions.
- Two further items since last meeting:
 1. **Treasurer:** after 8 years in the role, including gaining registration for tax-deductible donation status and putting our finances in a very healthy position, Adam Brown has a need to step down from the position. Peter Fitzroy is taking over the detailed work under Adam's general supervision. Peter has for many years helped with front-of-house duties at concerts and with other non-singing duties. He is Emeritus Professor of Marketing at Monash and a Trustee of our Donations Fund.
 2. **NZ Choir:** the National New Zealand Male Choir will be here in September. At their invitation, a combined concert will be held with them on 25th September, at Hawthorn Town Hall. Each choir will sing some 'lighter' items from their own repertoire – ours will include Mrs Beaton's Book.

An Afternoon with Schubert

Kathy Cox

The Camberwell Chorale and the Camerata Orchestra, conducted by Douglas Heywood, at Hawthorn Town Hall, Sunday 29 July 2007.

Soloists: Lauren Oldham (Soprano), Kerrie Bolton (Alto), Matthew Davine (Tenor), George Liakatos (Tenor) and Laurence Meikle (Bass).

The concert was a great success; and the good sized audience were most impressed with the performances by the choir and orchestra.

As usual, Doug's program notes and his talk before each half were very welcome. They helped put a meaningful perspective on what we were about to hear. Thank you, Doug.

The concert opened with the orchestra performing Schubert's Symphony No. 5 in B flat Major (D. 485). They played exceptionally well, very delicately and lyrically. The woodwinds coming through were particularly beautiful. I was reminded how lucky we are to have an orchestra of this calibre to perform with us.

The work for choir, Schubert's Mass in E flat Major (D. 950), was performed after the interval. Opening well on the Kyrie, it was disappointing that for parts of this section the voices were muffled and unclear. As the subsequent Gloria came in with confidence, and with good sound and balance, I wondered if perhaps the curtain so close behind had absorbed the choir's sound in the quietest passages?

The soloists all sang beautifully, especially the tenor duet, which was a lovely performance. Once again, congratulations must go to Doug for finding these talented young singers to sing with us. It is certainly a pleasure to perform with them.

In the Donna Nobis Pacem, where the soloists and choir took alternate phrases, both the choir and the soloists made the interplay smooth and delicate. As the soloists joined

Schubert Mass No 6 in Eb Major D950

A Primer from Stuart Hamilton

Franz Schubert (1797-1828) is far better known as the composer of lieder, symphonies, and chamber and piano music than for his sacred works, however he wrote six latin masses, a German Mass and a German Requiem and over thirty other such works, including an unfinished cantata *Lazarus*. He completed a first mass in 1814, and No 6, generally considered his greatest, was written in the last year of his life, at the same time as his other late masterpieces – the 9th symphony (the 'Great' C Major), his last songs (including those collected as '*Schwanengesang*'), the C Major String Quintet, the last three piano sonatas and the *Fantasie in F* for piano duet.

The Chorale recently sang his second Mass (in G), composed in 1816, a charming and straightforward work; the Eb Mass is on a rather larger and more ambitious scale. Like most of his later church works it was not authorised to be performed during church services, mainly due to his obviously deliberate failure to set the words "credo in unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam" (I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church). In fact, Schubert did not live to hear it performed at all: the first performance was in October 1829 at the Holy Trinity Church in Vienna, and it was not published until 1865.

the choir for the last passage it was surely one of the most moving pieces we have ever performed.

The Mass is a very rich and beautifully written work. It was great for the choir to have the opportunity to sing a completely new work. Many singers said it was very challenging to learn and to perform. This was not apparent to the audience! Many choristers also commented on how much they had enjoyed the challenge. Congratulations to all on such a creditable performance.

Alan Blyth writes of the work as follows: "Although the Mass is not conceived on the vast scale of Bach's in B Minor or Beethoven's in D, it is fully worthy to be spoken of in the same breath as those masterpieces for, in a lesser way, it speaks just so surely of things mortal and immortal, often with the peculiarly personal identity of which Schubert was particularly fond Throughout this work, Schubert puts the conventional form of setting the familiar text to unfamiliar ends. He does not attempt, as Beethoven did, to wrench the accepted methods this way and that, to fulfil a particular vision. Instead he manages to fit his extraordinary genius into the formulae of the age. The result is a work unassuming yet grave, straightforward yet full of those individual and personal touches that always distinguish his music".

Blyth particularly notes the switches of key and the wind scoring in the *Kyrie*, the 'supernatural' opening of the *Credo* with its inspired setting of the *Incarnatus* and the 'shuddering horror' of the *Crucifixus*, the 'disarming beauty and simplicity' of the *Benedictus* and the 'tremendous ongoing force' of the *Agnus Dei*.

The Gramophone recommends these two recordings:

1. Helen Donath, Lucia Popp *sops* Brigitte Fassbaender *mez* Adolf Dallapozza, Francisco Araiza, Peter Schreier *tens* Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau *bar* Bavarian Radio Chorus; Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Wolfgang Sawallisch. EMI CDM7 69223.
2. Karita Mattila *sop* Marjana Lipovsek *mez* Jerry Hadley, Jorge Pita *tens* Robert Holl *bass* Vienna State Opera Concert Choir; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra/Claudio Abbado. Deutsche Grammophon 423 088-2GH.

Ed: Stuart has kindly offered to prepare primers for works CC is practising.

September, 2007

Journey along the Silk Road

Helen Brown's trip through China to Kyrgystan and Samarkand in Uzbekistan was filled with variety and contrast . . .

*We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little farther: it may be
Beyond the last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea,
White on a throne or guarded cave
There lies a prophet who can understand
Why men were born: but surely we are brave,
Who make the Golden Journey to Samarkand.*

*A Golden Journey to Samarkand
James Elroy Flecker*

Well, not so brave anymore, as the journey to Samarkand has been made easier by modern transport and roads for trade and tourism.

The ancient starting point of the Silk Road is Xi'an, but we began our tour in Beijing where we visited the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square and made the short trip to Muttanya to see The Great Wall of China. As well as being useful for keeping rabbits out, the Great Wall is a most impressive structure and would have kept the marauding hordes from the north, under control. Built on the ridge of the mountains, it is very steep at times and requires some effort and fitness to walk between the lookout towers.

A short plane journey to the walled city of Xi'an brought us to the eastern terminus of the Silk Road and our real starting point. We did, however, make a diversion to see the



Not often deserted like this!

terracotta warriors and horses at the tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi (who died in 209BC), the first Emperor of a unified China. It is hard to imagine how anyone could have conceived guarding himself for the afterlife in such a grand way. It is truly amazing to see hundreds and hundreds of terracotta warriors arranged in rows.

The Muslim Quarter and Mosque in Xi'an were evidence of the influence of the traders arriving from the Middle East to China. The Mosque was particularly interesting as the architecture was traditionally Chinese!

Our overnight train from Xi'an followed the old trade route along the foot of the Qilian (pronounced Chilean) Mountains. We also traveled alongside the Yellow River for a while (the Yellow River is a fast flowing river that actually makes the Yarra look clear).

Our destination on this leg of the tour was Zhangye (where Marco Polo spent a year) and Jiayguan. Both these places are oases in the Gobi Desert. They harvest water from the snow on the nearby mountains. Jiayguan is now a modern city with steel as its main industry employing about 70% of the population. Formerly, however, it was the last Chinese outpost on the Silk Road (or the first coming from the west). Here we saw, and climbed on, the western end of the Great Wall of China. There were also fragments of the Wall (not repaired) that were originally made of a rammed earth construction because of the scarcity of rocks and other suitable material for building.

In this area, there are hundreds

of caves with thousands of images of Buddha (to give thanks for a successful crossing of the deserts or to ask for a successful crossing). Bandits and extreme weather were the main hazards.

We kept traveling west towards our eventual goal of Samarkand through the oasis towns of Dunhuang, Turpan and Kashgar. These interesting places have been visited for about 2000 years by traders. Kashgar (in the Uigher Autonomous Region of China) has a long established Sunday live-stock-market. We spent an interesting morning observing the trading of sheep, goats, cows, donkeys, horses and even a camel. Watching the wonderfully craggy faces of the elderly men with their wispy beards haggling over the price of a donkey made the experience a very special one.

We left the Gobi Desert and entered the Taklamaken Desert. It was still very barren and stony with high snow-covered mountains in the distance. There is snow throughout the year and the snowmelt is collected using an ingenious way of channeling the water in underground tunnels.

From Kashgar we drove to Kyrgyzstan over the Tourget Pass and traveled through the area known as 'The Hungry Steppes of Central Asia'. There seemed to be good pasture for the livestock, although still not much in the way of trees. We were lucky enough to get to talk to a shepherd who spends the summer minding his livestock on the summer pasture and living in a yurt (which is erected for the summer and put away in the autumn). We actually slept in a yurt, which was a different experience!!!

We spent a short time in both Bishkek (capital of Kyrgyzstan) and Tashkent (capital of Uzbekistan). These are both now modern cities and worthy of a longer stay. But by now we were anxious to move forward to Samarkand and Bukhara.

It was here that we saw the wondrous blue domes and mosaic work that these places are renowned for. The Registan in Samarkand is now a public square. The square is bounded on three sides by magnificent madrassahs and mosques built in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.

[Madrasahs were the universities of the time, not the educational institutions we now associate with the name]. Samarkand is also the site of the Tomb of Tamerlane (the great ruler and warrior on the 14th century who died in 1405). This tomb has a most beautiful fluted blue mosaic dome which shines and glistens in the

hot sun of Samarkand. As well as the beauties of the Registan and the Tomb of Tamerlane, there is a group of mausoleums and funeral mosques with about nine shiny blue mosaic domes and the most wonderful interior decoration of gold and mosaics.

Our journey ended here, but for

the ancient traders, they continued on to Moscow, Lyon, Madrid and other places westward.

With the trip over, there was one last treat in store – flying over the snow-capped mountains of the Tien Shan range on the way back to Beijing and then home.



Our route



Well-known, but wonderfully impressive, nevertheless



Some of the magnificent religious architecture

PEN PICTURES of FELLOW CHORISTERS

Val Kerr (alto)

How Music has Affected my Life

I was fortunate to have a good start in life, with musical parents who were always encouraging and understanding, especially of an eight-year old not taking kindly to piano practice. My mother had been a piano and singing teacher before her marriage and I can never remember my family life without music seeming to be part of everything we did.

My mother had a light soprano voice and whenever she was invited to sing anywhere, mostly gatherings in different homes, she would always accompany herself on the piano. This seemed to me quite normal at the time, but I realize now how capable she must have been. She and my father with his rich bass voice were members of our local Congregational Church choir for over forty years. From the time they were first engaged my parents sang in "Messiah" performances as the soprano and bass soloists in different churches. I joined my parents later and had many happy years, initially singing soprano, before joining the altos. My present Uniting Church has a wonderful Tongan choir and I only sing with them when the anthem is in English.

We began attending MSO concerts in the Melbourne Town Hall in the 1930's. Our seats were in the balcony overlooking the orchestra, as my father felt it would be more interesting for me and my two brothers to be close to the players. In the early days my mother always wore an evening dress complete with long white gloves, which was the custom for concertgoers at that time. I can still hear my father calling out "Bravo" when he had been particularly moved by a certain performance. I still attend MSO concerts, the only change being that I go to the Saturday afternoon series. All told, I have been a subscriber for over seventy years.

When I was a student at MLC in the 1930's there was a wonderful music director, Ruth Flockart, who was well-known in Melbourne for the quality of the choirs she trained and conducted. I was fortunate to be chosen for her school choir and smaller madrigal group of about twenty singers. I can remember the enjoyment of preparing for the Inter-House Music Contest each year, particularly when I had the pleasure of conducting my House choir in my final year.



As I look back, I can see that it was the sight-reading training that was going to be the most valuable to me in the future. As well as choral items, part of the contest was a sight-reading test where a blackboard was turned round and we were given a short time to look at it before singing the notes in sol-fa. A group of about thirty girls took part in this. Dr Floyd, our adjudicator, would allocate points for the various sections. His summing-up was always entertaining, but with his whimsical sense of humour he en-

joyed keeping us in suspense until the last moment. At this time I was still having piano lessons, a subject I took for my Matriculation, and I had also begun learning the cello.

From 1954-56 we had two years in London when my father was one of the two doctors at Australia House examining prospective emigrants. We attended many concerts at the Royal Festival Hall and Royal Albert Hall during that period and we were privileged to see and hear in action such conductors as Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Malcolm Sargent and Sir John Barbirolli, as well as hearing Eileen Joyce in an unforgettable performance of Rachmaninoff's No. 2 Piano Concerto, which has always been a favourite of mine. Elsie Morrison, an Australian soprano, was performing leading roles in London at that time and we heard her in "La Boheme" and "The Marriage of Figaro", both at Covent Garden, and also in "Messiah" at the Royal Festival Hall.

My father had been the Victorian Rhodes Scholar in 1913 and he was keen for us to hear the carol singing from the top of Magdalen Tower in Oxford at 6 o'clock on May Morning, a very old tradition that is still kept up every year. This was followed by Morris dancing, punting on the Cherwell and students having breakfast along the banks. An unforgettable experience!

I would also like to mention two other special events I was fortunate enough to attend with friends. Firstly, in 1978, we were in Venice for a concert in San Marco to celebrate the tri-centenary of Vivaldi's birth (1678-1978). Secondly, in 1984, we enjoyed a wonderful recital in the drawing room of Grieg's home, Troldhaugen, near Bergen, where the piano was one which had been played by the composer. It dated from the 1840s, as did the beautifully carved piano stool.

I consider myself greatly blessed to have had the opportunity of singing in the Camberwell Chorale; and

... continued opposite ... 

Robynne Sanders (tenor)

Developing my Musical Life

When I was asked to write this piece I looked at the articles in the last newsletter, by Chris Murray and Stuart Hamilton. In contrast to those twin pillars it is very clear that I am somewhat lacking in experience.

I was born in Essex but my parents moved to Sydney before I turned one (or as I put it, I was transported at 9 months). Neither of my parents were musical, and growing up our house was very silent – there was not even music on the radio.

I attended the local primary school and, though I displayed no musical talent, somehow joined the school choir. The choir was very small and there were no formal voice parts, we were simply graded A (high) to E (low). At the age of 7 I was graded as a D voice and sang with the boys (I guess I was fated to be a tenor). The repertoire was very light and we performed mainly at school functions and in the local community.

My primary school also took part in the combined choral concert, held annually at the Sydney Opera House. I was very fortunate to perform as one of approximately 500 choristers in the performances in 1985 and 1986. My memories of that experience, apart from the sheer size of the venue, are of the

 ... continued from opposite ...

this widening of my musical experience has given a real purpose to my retirement. I would like to finish by reminding all my fellow-choristers never to take anything for granted as it is only when you see the end of your singing days approaching that you truly appreciate how rewarding and fulfilling it has all been.

great patience shown by the conductor in getting so many primary school students to behave, project their voice and enunciate their words 'all the way to the end'.



When I was ten my mother, brother and I went to live with my grandparents in Newcastle (north of Sydney) where I was exposed to classical music for the first time. Granddad loved the classics and ABC classical played constantly. My brother Paul, who was severely handicapped, shared Granddad's passion and we accumulated hundreds of classical CDs. As Paul spent most of his time at home we played CDs for him – constantly, without break, from morning till night, every weekend, for years and years and years. He loved it, but I got to the point where I heard Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* in my sleep.

The local high school I attended in Newcastle had a large music department which focused on the school band. Music was a compulsory subject at my high school and, after three years, my teachers were

satisfied that (a) I could not play any musical instrument (and they made me try a lot of them), and (b) I had no hope of ever being able to read music.

The school did have a choir but it was only open for members of the band, and was seen as something for the band to do between performances at eisteddfods.

When I expressed interest in joining the choir the music teachers initially objected but eventually let me in, choosing instead to make the experience so unpleasant that I lost all my enjoyment in the choir and left. I did not sing again until I joined CC last year.

I attended the University of Newcastle for 5 years undertaking a combined Law/Science degree. I took up ballroom dancing (which is why I count time with my foot) to use up my artistic energy. When I finished my degrees I moved to Sydney where I worked as a lawyer and studied to be a patent attorney, before moving to Melbourne in mid 2004.

In 2005 I was at an industry event where I met Peter Hallett (tenor) who said he sang in a choir. I had always regretted leaving the choir in high school and allowing my music teacher to rob me of the enjoyment I had in choral singing so I decided I might rejoin a choir. I find it more comfortable to sing as a tenor; and I also find the music is more interesting.

When, later that year, Peter joined the legal firm I work for I eventually discovered CC. It was fortuitous that Peter was not at rehearsal this first time I attended CC as I may have killed him – he neglected to tell me that CC sang classical pieces and not always in English. However, I decided that it sounded beautiful and I would just have to learn fast. I don't think I have been with the choir for long enough to say 'and the rest is history' but perhaps I can say 'and the rest will be history'.

September, 2007

Lighter Moments

"How green was my laundry"

Kermit was right. Being green wasn't easy.

Smart frog, Kermit, and he'd feel right at home in our laundry, because our new greywater system has turned our house into an oasis.

By that I mean that all around it is a desert but the laundry is a swamp.

The cupboards have become water features.

And to think I did it all myself!

Men are no strangers to waste-water recycling. Ask any lemon tree.

Stage 3 restrictions weren't so much a dilemma as a chance to outsmart nature.

I was brimming full of ideas, but none of them got the garden watered.

A lemon tree is fine, but the thought of a whole garden makes my kidneys ache.

I could have called a registered plumber, but I don't know the area code for Portsea or how to phone a yacht.

So I did what you do. I did it myself. This has not always been a great idea.

One time I converted the in-ground fish pond into a sand pit, and ended up with a quicksand pit.

Usually, though, things sort of work out, and getting water through a hose is not brain surgery. The hardware barn's plumbing aisle, in fact, looked like a casting call for Dumb and Dumber.

I fought through the clueless, got the cheapest water diverter they had, and rolls and rolls of hose.

The salesmen don't tell you, but drip systems are called that because you're a drip if you buy one.

Weeper hose is so named because it makes you weep in frustration at 8.01 pm on Tuesdays.

That's when half of Melbourne turns on the tap.

After a day on my knees clawing a hose trench through the tree roots and rock-hard dirt – burying, mulch-



Celebrating mid-year Christmas

ing, swearing – I had a system.

All I needed was to turn on the tap and feel smug.

So I did, and found out prostate patients have better water pressure than the front yard on Tuesday night.

You have to turn the tap on full-bore to get a drip.

Nine minutes later there's another one.

Then, at 8.30, CSI comes on telly. Everyone downs hoses and goes in, normal pressure resumes, and the real show starts – outside.

That weeper hose suddenly erupted like Yellowstone National Park, until it blew apart.

I have since had words with the hardware store, which will not be repeated in this newsletter.

It offered to exchange the hose for another brand the salesman assured me was also rubbish.

He said they'd been getting lots of rubbish that had been warehoused forever because nobody would buy it – until Stage 3 turned it to gold.

On a brighter note, the greywater diverter went on the pipe outside the laundry in five minutes.

For readers less plumbingly inclined, I will explain how it works.

The pipe that would usually whoosh water down a drain, and closes when you turn a dial.

After being briefly confused, the water realizes it has no choice but to squirt out another opening.



In theory, that tiny opening

leads to a lush lawn.

In reality, it leads to an overpriced, puce hose someone found in a warehouse behind a crate of Gary Glitter cassettes and a fossilized rat.

For men, the theory of fluid dynamics is usually aimed at shaming someone into going to the bar.

Now, I have a greywater theory too. It was too embarrassed to even consider going down our very camp puce pipe.

The sink filled up. Froth spurted out. It looked like Elvis had bombed the laundry with fire-retardant.

Four seals in the S-bend burst to get in on the fun.

Who would have thought wash-water could run uphill, sideways, and actually climb cupboard walls?

Four whole cupboards of stuff got drenched and it took five huge washes to get them clean again.

So much for water-saving devices. Now I'm rethinking the garden plans, perhaps doing the yard out in a cactus and cow-skull motif.

Outside, there is no less than 75m of various sized tubing, all of it as dry as a Salvo's picnic.

But it is not entirely useless.

I'm taking a length back to the shop to throttle a salesman.